

Questions On Doctrine

Christ, and Michael and Archangel

QUESTION 8

It has been charged that Seventh-day Adventists hold the same belief as do the Jehovah's Witnesses concerning Michael—that Michael the archangel was Jesus Christ prior to His incarnation, and that he was a created being. Is this accusation valid? If Michael is Christ, how do you explain Jude 9?

71

We emphatically reject the idea set forth in this question, and the position held by the Jehovah's Witnesses. We do not believe that Christ is a created being. We, as a people, have not considered the identification of Michael of sufficient prominence to dwell upon it at length either in our literature or in our preaching. But we do have clear views on the subject, and are prepared to set them forth. And our views concerning Michael, it might be added, have been held by various eminent scholars through the centuries. We are therefore not alone in our understanding.

We believe that the term "Michael" is but one of the many titles applied to the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead. But such a view does not in any way conflict with our belief in His full deity and eternal pre-existence, nor does it in the least disparage His person and work.

72

Michael is referred to in the book of Jude as the archangel. And were it not for other Scripture references, which present Him in another relationship, one might at first conclude that He was a created being, as are the angels in general. We believe, however, that those other relationships indicate His real status, and that, in addition, He serves as supreme

leader of the angelic hosts. But His serving in that capacity does not make Him a created angel. A number of important factors must be considered in a study of this question.

I. Christ in Relation to Angelic Hosts

Angels are created beings (Col. 1:16), and as such are not to be worshiped (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10). They are God's messengers to those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:13, 14).

But Christ has "a more excellent name" than the angels (Heb. 1:4). He has "a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9), above that of every angel in heaven (Eph. 1:21). The angels are subject to Him (1 Peter 3:22). They bow before Him (Phil. 2:10), and worship Him (Heb. 1:6). Angels of God refuse the worship of men (Rev. 22:8, 9).

II. The Son of God in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament there is record of a divine Being who is called the "angel of the Lord" (Ex. 3:2), the "angel of God" (Ex. 14:19), and the "angel of his presence" (Isa. 63:9), "messenger of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1); also "an Angel" (Ex. 23:20), "mine Angel" (verse 23), and "his angel" (Dan. 3:28). Let us note certain of these references:

73

1. ***The "Angel of the Lord."***—(a) As manifested to Gideon (Judges 6:11-22). The "angel of the Lord" (verse 11) is equated with "the Lord" (verse 14); and "Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord" (verse 24). (b) As manifested to Manoah (Judges 13:3-21). Manoah's wife refers to the "angel of the Lord" (verse 3) that she had seen as "a man of God" (verse 6), and Manoah said they had "seen God" (verse 22). (c) As manifested to Joshua (Zech. 3:1-6). "The angel of the Lord" causes iniquity to pass away, and gives change of raiment, or righteousness (verse 4). This is the prerogative of Deity.

2. ***"The "Angel " Who Appeared to Jacob."***—This Angel (Hosea 12:4) appeared to Jacob in the form of a man (Gen. 32:24). The Angel (man) blessed Jacob (verse 29), and Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face" (verse 30). Worship of angels is not permitted (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9). This is an important difference between Christ and angels.

3. ***The "Angel of His Presence."***—This Angel "saved," "redeemed" (Isa. 63:9), hence is equated with Deity (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6).

4. ***"Mine Angel."***—This "Angel" (Ex. 23:23) could pardon transgression, and God's "name is in him" (verse 21). As forgiveness of sin is the prerogative of God (Mark 2:7), the confusion seems inevitable that "mine Angel" is a member of the Godhead. With this background, it is not difficult to recognize that there was with God, in ancient days, One

who was known in the foregoing instances as "the angel of the Lord," or "mine Angel," and then later as "my Son" (Ps. 2:7). At the same time He was "mine anointed" (Heb., *Meshiach*).

74

He is also called "a child," "a son" (Isa. 9:6). And this "son" is none other than "The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (verse 6). The *Targum* on Isaiah 9:5 (Hebrew versification varies from KJV) reads: "Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, He who lives for ever, the Anointed one [or, Messiah]."

III. Identity of "Prince of Princes"

The expression "Prince of princes" occurs but once in the Divine Record—Daniel 8:25. In the vision seen by Daniel an opposing power "magnified himself even to the prince of the host"; in the angel's explanation to Daniel this power is said to "stand up against the Prince of princes." The "prince of the host" is equated with "the Prince of princes." Reference is obviously here made to Deity. The expression is similar to other expressions in the Word. Psalm 136:3 speaks of the "Lord of lords," Deuteronomy 10:17 of the "God of gods," and Revelation 19:16 of the "King of kings."

Doctor Slotki, in his *Commentary* on Daniel, shows the term "Prince of princes" (Dan. 8:25) to be the same as the "prince of the host" of verse 11. And in commenting on these two expressions, the *Cambridge Bible* says, "i.e. God." But this "Prince of princes," or "prince of the host," is also referred to as Michael. Daniel 10:21 tells of "Michael your prince," and Daniel 12:1 of Michael, "the great prince." But this Prince is also the Messiah, for we read of "Messiah the Prince" in Daniel 9:25. Others agree. Joseph Parker states:

Michael was known amongst the ancient Jews as the angel or prince who had special charge of the nation of Israel. The very best Jewish writers concur in teaching that the name "Michael" is the same as the title "Messiah." it is held by them that the

75

few passages in which he is referred to can be most satisfactorily explained on this supposition. The man speaking in the text was "a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (vers. 5, 6). This is the dazzling and nameless personage that has appealed to the religious imagination through all the known centuries of time. One day—not one of earth's cold, grey days, but a day of brighter cast—we shall see that

Personage, and name him, and thank him for the tender veiling of a light that might have struck creation blind.—*The People's Bible*, vol. 16, p. 438.

The One unnamed in Daniel 10:5, 6—but described as having the appearance of lightning—is well known in apocalyptic vision. A similar description of Him is found in Revelation 1:13-15. Is not He who is unnamed in Daniel 10:5, 6 now named in Daniel 10:13, when He is designated as Michael?

New Testament writers also take up this thought and apply the terminology of Daniel to Jesus Christ our Lord. He is Declared to be "the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15); "a Prince" and "a Saviour" (Acts 5:31); and "the prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5).

This Prince, or Messiah, of the apocalyptic visions of ancient days, is thus equated with Michael. Hence the name Michael is, we believe, one of the titles of the Son of the living God. But Michael is called the Archangel (Jude 9) and this term, we believe, also applies to Jesus our Lord.

IV. The Term "Archangel"

Having given consideration to Christ as the "Angel of the Lord" and having made mention of the fact that "Michael" and "archangel" are titles of our Lord, let us observe the significance of the first part of the term "archangel."

76

"Arch" is from the Greek prefix *archi*, but related words such as *arche* and *archon* should also be considered.

Arche means beginning, and can also involve the ideas of rule and authority. It is rendered in the KJV as "rule" (1 Cor. 15:24); "principality" (Eph. 1:21); and "first principles" (Heb. 5:12). *Archon* means "prince," "ruler." *Arche* and *archon* are used at times in relation to our Lord as in the term "Angel of the Lord." *Arche* is used Messianically in Isaiah 9:6 where in the LXX (Bagster's translation) it is rendered "government" in the expression, "whose government [*arche*] is upon his [Messiah's] shoulder."

In the New Testament, Jesus our Lord is called "the beginning" [*arche*] (Col. 1:18), also the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning [*arche*]" (Rev. 21:6; see also Rev. 22:13).

Archon is often rendered "ruler," "prince," et cetera. But once in the New Testament it is used in relation to Jesus "the prince [*archon*] of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5).

Archon is used on occasions Messianically, and so refers to Christ our Saviour. He is "a

prince [*archon*] and commander to the Gentiles" (Isa. 55:4, LXX, Bagster's translation); He is the One that is "to be a ruler [*archon*] of Israel" (Micah 5:2, LXX, Bagster's translation). Another Greek word with the same prefix *archi* is *archegos* derived from *marchi* and *hegeomai* or *ago*—"to lead," et cetera.

77

Archegos as found in the LXX is generally rendered by Bagster's translation as "head," "captain," "chief," "ruler," "prince," et cetera. But in the New Testament it is used only with reference to our Lord. He is referred to as captain—"The captain [*archegos*] of their salvation" (Heb. 2:10); as author—"The author [*archegos*] . . . of our faith" (Heb. 12:2, margin, "beginner"); as Prince—"A Prince [*archegos*] and a Saviour" (Acts 5: 31); and "the Prince [*archegos*] of life" (Acts 3:15, margin, "author").

The study of the above Greek words shows that at times they have been applied to Christ our Lord; further, that *archegos* in its use in the New Testament is in *every* instance applied to Jesus.

V. Christ in Relation to the Angel Hosts

In the light of the foregoing we believe that the divine Son of God, one of whose titles is "Michael the archangel," is the leader of the angelic hosts. But to us, this does not in any way whatsoever detract from His deity, any more than when He became man and took our flesh. He certainly became "the Son of man," but all the while He was on earth as man, He was at the same time God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 4:10). Furthermore, He is also revealed in Scripture as leader of the hosts of Israel, under the title of the "angel of Jehovah," the "angel of his presence," et cetera. But being such, did not restrict, or detract from, His deity. Why could He not, then, be considered "Captain General" (LXX)* of the hosts of angels without equating Him with angels

*Joshua 5:14, Eng. tr. by Charles Thomson.

78

as created beings? The being who appeared to Joshua as "captain of the host of the Lord" was a divine being, whom Joshua worshiped (Joshua 5:14). Thus the hosts of the Lord are under command of a divine being worthy of worship, and whose presence makes a place holy (verse 15). This Divine Being we believe was none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe, therefore, that there is good reason for recognizing our blessed Lord as the leader of the heavenly hosts.

VI. Michael in Jewish Literature

In Jewish writings Michael is recognized as the Advocate in Israel, who mediated in many ways. Thus:

He prevented Isaac's being sacrificed (*Yalkut Reubeni*, section Wayera); wrestled with Jacob (*Targum*, Gen. 32:25); was Advocate when Israel deserved death at the Red Sea (*Exodus Rabbah*, 18:5); led Israel during the forty years in the wilderness (Abravanel to Ex. 23:20); gave Moses the tables of stone (*Apoc. Moses*, 1); instructed Moses at Sinai (*Bk. Jubilees*, i. 27, ii. 1); destroyed the army of Sennacherib* (*Midr. Exod.* 18: 5); was one of the angels who visited Abraham* (*Yoma*, 37^a; *Shebu'oth*, 351^b footnote); was Israel's guardian angel (*Yoma*. 77^a); ministers in the heavenly sanctuary (*Menahoth*, 110^a).

VII. Michael in the Setting of Jude's Epistle

Jude's epistle was written to combat a heresy that had invaded the church of that day, for false teachers were corrupting and making of none effect "the faith

*this statement refers to the angel of his presence," which the Jewish Encyclopedia says is Michael.

79

which was once delivered unto the saints" (verse 3) Jude's letter was an appeal to the loyal members to break from the association of these subverters of truth. The author does not go into detail concerning this heresy, for his letter is not a systematic theology, but is rather a battle cry.

This book is small, but rich in allusions and quotations. It is apparent that the correct teachings against which Jude was warning the church were liberalism and antinomianism. Not only was this false philosophy basically wrong in concept, but when followed out in the life, it led to depravity and revolting immorality. Those who had introduced this subversive heresy had evidently entered the church surreptitiously, and were threatening to undermine the very structure of the temple of truth.

1. **Ultimate End of Rebellion.**—The depravity of this teaching is evidenced by the writer's reference to the gross immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah, while the attitude of the teachers themselves he illustrated by the rebellion of Korah. "Woe unto them," he warns, that "have gone in the way of Cain" (verse 11). Emphasizing the ultimate end of these defamers of righteousness, he refers particularly to the destiny of the rebellious angels. These celestial beings, "which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (verse 6), are reserved unto judgment. They are awaiting the coming day of final punishment.

The reason Jude refers to the rebellion of the angels, and the rebellion of ancient Israel

against authority, is clear. He warns the curb that all who "speak evil of those things which they know not" will perish (verse 10).

80

He speaks of these heretics as defilers of the flesh, and declares that not only did they set at naught the counsel of church authority, but they actually denied the authority of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their "hard speeches" (verse 15), or railing accusations, were not only denunciations against apostolic authority, but utterances against God Himself.

2. *Jude's Reference to Michael.*—It was obviously not Jude's purpose to identify Michael, except to call attention to the fact that He is the archangel. His reference to Michael is really by way of contrast. This contrast is drawn between those who brought a railing accusation, and Michael who would not do so. On the one hand he contrasts those "filthy dreamers" who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities" (verse 8), with Michael, the archangel, on the other hand. He, a heavenly being, even when in dispute with the prince of evil, though there was just reason for doing so, "durst not" bring a railing accusation. This is the contrast: They, mere men, so despised authority as to rail against those in high authority; whereas Michael, the archangel, would not act thus even when disputing with Satan.

The devil, the prince of evil, could rightly be said to deserve a railing accusation, but to such a thing Michael would not stoop. To say that Michael *could not*, in the sense that He did not have the power or the authority to do so, would not be true. It is not that Michael *could not*, in the sense of being restricted, but rather that He *would not* take such an attitude. *Scott's Bible* remarks:

He yet *dared* not to utter any reviling expression: not from fear of the devil; but because even in those circumstances, it would not have been consistent with the perfection of his character.

81

What these carping critics dared to do, Michael would not do. They were abusive, defamatory, slanderous, even blasphemous. But Michael, even in dealing with the devil, revealed dignity and heavenly bearing. He could not descend to such a level of defamatory speech. Instead of multiplying words, He authoritatively declared, "The Lord rebuke thee" (verse 9).

The use of the expression "The Lord rebuke thee" is significant. It is found in but one other place in the Holy Scriptures—Zechariah 3:2. There the speaker is "the angel of the Lord" (verse 1); but in verse 2, it is expressly the "Lord" who speaks. Here we find the "angel of the Lord" equated with Jehovah Himself, and it is He who says to Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee."

This is a unique expression. The first Biblical use of it is by the Lord in dealing with Satan. The same expression is used in Jude. Might it not be, then, that the same Divine Being is revealed here? In Zechariah He was manifested under one of His titles, "the angel of the Lord," in Jude under another of His titles, "Michael."

Furthermore, the archangel is referred to but twice in the Sacred Scripture—1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 9. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of the "voice of the archangel" and associates that with the general resurrection of the saints; whereas in Jude, the reference specifically concerns the body of Moses. Another reference to Michael as leader of the angelic host is seen in Revelation 12:7-10. Many scholars through the centuries have applied this to the days when

82

Satan rebelled, before ever our world was made. Then there was war in heaven. Michael and His angels fought against the dragon and his angels. Here is evidently the beginning of the great controversy between the forces of righteousness and of evil. In this passage Michael and Satan are placed in contrast. Who is the Michael of this apocalyptic passage? If Christ is the leader of the angel hosts, then we see here the first battle in the great conflict between Christ and Satan.

There is good reason for this concept, for we read that it was through "the power of his Christ" that "the accuser of our brethren" was cast down (Rev. 12:10). Victory for the saints is possible only through our risen Lord. It was Christ who triumphed over Satan in the original encounter. And it is through Christ that we overcome in the continuing encounters against the devil and his evil hosts.

Matthew Henry remarked on this passage:

. . . "Michael and his angels" on one side, and "the dragon and his angels" on the other. Christ, the great angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan and all his instruments.

VIII. Summary of the Evidence

1. Terms used concerning Christ are similar to those used of Michael: (a) *of Christ*, as "Prince of princes," as "prince of the host," as "Messiah the Prince," and as the "Prince of life"; (b) *of Michael*, as "your prince," and as the "great prince."
2. As archangel is used of Michael, so is *archegos* and *archon* used of Christ. Thus: Christ is the *archegos*—the "captain", (Heb. 2:10); the "author" (Heb. 12:2); the "Prince" (Acts 3:15).

3. The beginning of the great controversy between Christ (Michael) and Satan is seen in Revelation 12:7-10.
4. Michael exercises the same prerogative as does Jehovah when He says to Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee."
5. Michael is equated with Christ by many Bible scholars.

From the foregoing it will be seen that our concept of Michael, as just another title for the Lord Jesus Christ, is vastly different from the views of others who teach that Michael is merely a created, angelic being and not the Eternal Word of God. In direct contrast to such a depreciating Christology, Seventh-day Adventists hold that Jesus is "very God of very God, of the same substance as the Father"—coequal, coexistent, and coeternal with God the Father. We believe that there never was a time when Christ was not. He is God forevermore, His life being "original, unborrowed, underived."

Additional Notes

1. *Christ as the "Angel of the Lord"*

On Ex. 23:20:

"Behold, I send a messenger before thee." Jewish commentators regard the messenger as Moses, who, no doubt, was a specially commissioned ambassador for God, and who might, therefore, well be termed God's messenger. But the expression—'He will not pardon your transgressions,' and 'My name is in Him,' are too high for Moses. An angel must be intended—probably 'the Angel of the Covenant,'—whom the best expositors identify with the Second Person of the Trinity, the Ever-Blessed Son of God.—George Rawlinson, *Pulpit Commentary*, "Exodus," vol. 2, p. 212.

"Others suppose it ["an angel," Ex. 23:20; "mine angel," Ex. 23:23] to be the Son of God, the Angel of the covenant; for the

Israelites in the wilderness are said to 'tempt Christ,' and we may as well suppose him God's messenger, and the church's redeemer, before his incarnation, as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world."—*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Exodus 23, general note.

"There seems to be no reason to doubt that, in this Messenger of Yahweh,

we catch a glimpse of some mystery in the Godhead. For contrast with the inferior messenger, see chap. 33:2, 3."—J. B.. Rotherham, *The Emphasized Old Testament* (1916), note on Ex. 23:20.

On Judges 6:

"The person that gave him the commission was 'an angel of the Lord;' it should seem, not a created angel, but the Son of God Himself, the Eternal Word, the Lord of the angels. This angel is here called Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, ver. 14, 16; and he saith, 'I will be with thee.'"
"—*Matthew Henry's Commentary*.

On Judges 13:

"And this angel . . . was the Lord himself, that is, the Word of the Lord, who was to be the Messiah, for his name is called Wonderful, ver. 18, and Jehovah, ver. 19."—*Ibid*.

On Daniel 3

"There was a fourth seen with them in the fire, whose form, in Nebuchadnezzar's judgment, was 'like the Son of God;' he appeared as a Divine person, a messenger from heaven, not as a servant, but as a Son. 'Like an angel,' so some; and angels are called 'sons of God,' *Job xxxviii, 7*. In the apocryphal narrative of this story it is said, 'The angel of the Lord came down into the furnace;' and Nebuchadnezzar here saith, (ver. 28,) that God sent his angel and delivered them; and it was an angel that shut the lions' mouths when Daniel was in the den, ch. vi. 22. But some think it was the eternal Son of God, the angel of the covenant, and not a created angel. He appeared often in our nature before he assumed it for good and all [in his incarnation]; and never more seasonably, nor to give a more proper indication and presage of his great errand into the world, in the fulness of time, than now, when to deliver his chosen out of the fire he came and walked with them in the fire."—*Ibid*.

"In reality it was Christ, the Son of God, who appeared at this time in human shape."—T. Robinson, *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary* (1892), "Daniel," p.72.

"In ver. 28, the king calls him God's 'angel,' which He no doubt was—the 'angel of the Lord,' otherwise called the 'Messenger of the Covenant,' the

Son of God, who in the fulness of time was 'made flesh and dwelt among us.'
"—*Ibid.*, p. 73

On Hebrews 12:

"This is by many modern Expositors referred to *God*; but by the, ancient and some modern ones, to *Christ*; which is far more agreeable to the context.—S. T. Bloomfield, *Greek New Testament* (1847) (vol. II, p. 475), on Heb. 12:25.

" 'The voice sounding from Sinai.' See supra v. 19. The best Expositors are in general agreed that the [word] *ou* refers (as grammatical propriety would require) to *Christ*, notwithstanding that the thing is in Exodus ascribed to *God*. Nor is there any inconsistency, since the N. T. and the Rabbinical writings agree in representing it as the Son of God, who appeared to the patriarchs, who delivered the Law by angels, and who was the ANGEL-JEHOVAH worshipped in the Hebrew Church. See Acts 7:53, and 1 Cor. 10:4, 9."—*Ibid.*, (vol. II, p. 475), on Heb. 12:26.

2. Concerning Michael as Title of Christ.

On Daniel 10:

"Some . . . think *Michael* the archangel is no other than Christ himself, the angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels; to whom Daniel saw in vision, ver. 5. He 'came to help me,' ver. 13; and there is none but he that holdeth with me in these things, ver. 21. Christ is the church's prince, angels are not."—*Matthew Henry's Commentary*.

On Daniel 12

"Jesus Christ shall appear his church's patron and protector. 'At that time,' when the persecution is at the hottest, 'Michael shall stand up,' ver. 1. The angel had told Daniel what a fast friend Michael was to the church, ch x. 21. He all along shewed it in the upper world, the angels knew it; but now 'Michael shall stand up' in his providence, and work deliverance for the Jews, when he sees that their power is gone,' *Deu.* xxxii. 36. Christ is that 'great prince,' for he is the 'Prince of the kings of the earth,' Rev. i:5."—*Ibid.*

On Jude 9:

"Of this personage many things are spoken in the Jewish writings. 'Rabbi Judah Hakkodesh says: Wherever *Michael* is said to appear, the glory of the Divine Majesty is always to be understood.'

Shemoth Rabba, Sec. ii., fol. 104, 3. So it seems as if they considered Michael in some sort as we do the Messiah manifested in the flesh."—*Clarke's Commentary* (6 vol. ed.).

"The word *Michael* . . . *he who is like God*; hence by this personage, in the Apocalypse, many understood the Lord Jesus."—*Ibid.*

On Rev. 12:7:

"Michael was the man child which the woman brought forth."—*Clarke's Commentary*.

"This being 'a war in the heaven,' and waged by Michael, who is Christ (whose warfare is not like that of earthly kings), and by His messengers, is an intellectual and polemical warfare."—J. D. Glasgow, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1872).

"We have shown elsewhere that the Archangel Michael is an image of Christ victoriously combatant. Christ is an Archangel in His quality of judge; and He appears as judge, not only at the end of the world, but also in the preservation of the purity of His Church."—*Lange's Commentary* (1874), on Rev. 12:1-12, Exegetical and Critical Synoptic View, p. 238.

"'Michael and his angels' on one side, and 'the dragon and his angels' on the other. Christ, the great angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan and all his instruments. This latter party would be much superior in number and outward strength to the other; but the strength of the church lies in having the Lord Jesus for the Captain of their salvation."—*Matthew Henry's Commentary*.

"The idea of the heavenly being who thus comes to view as a feature in old apocalyptic tradition is the source of the conception of the heavenly Messiah—the Son of Man. . . . We have already seen that the heavenly being 'like unto a son of man' of Dan. 7 was probably identified by the author . . . with Israel's angel—prince Michael; this angelic being was later, it would seem, invested with Messianic attributes, and so became the pre-existent heavenly Messiah."—*Abingdon Bible Commentary*, p. 846.

(See also *Calvin's Commentaries* on "Daniel," vol. 2, pp. 253, 368, also p. 13).